

Case History: The South side of Ponca City, OK and The White Eagle Indian Community

- **Describe the impacted community (population, neighborhood, general statistics, history, etc):**

The South side of Ponca City, OK is residential neighborhoods that are built in close proximity to the Conoco Phillips refinery as well as other industrial business. Those affected are mostly low income, minority residents. The ethnic make up of this area of town is primarily African American, Native American and Hispanic. Approximately 10,000 residents reside in this area of Ponca City.

The White Eagle Community is 6 miles south of Ponca City, and is the home of the Ponca Nation of Oklahoma. After forced removal from their native homelands in Nebraska, the Ponca Tribe was given "Indian Land" in present day Kay County Oklahoma. Over the years, the land base has dwindled to an approximate 10 square mile area, with many outlying rural residents. Within this 10 square miles lies Conco/Phillips, Continental Carbon Black, Ponca Iron and Metal, a metal smelter, a gravel cleaning facility, many open dumps, and the landfill for the City of Ponca City.

- **What are/were the problems affecting this community?**

High unemployment, and very low income affect residents of both of the above-mentioned areas. The Native American Community seems affected to the extreme by high rates of Diabetes, heart and respiratory illness, as well as many forms of cancer.

- **What partnerships were formed to address the problems and challenges?**

Ponca Tribal members have formed alliances with local farmers, members of the PACE Union (formerly locked out of Continental Carbon), local environmentalists, the Indigenous Environmental Network, and the Southern Justice League.

- **What were the major challenges the community faced or faces in overcoming the problems?**

The Industrial Corporations are ensconced within the political and social "norms" of Oklahoma. The economic impact of oil, and other industry in Oklahoma promotes the "Oil is King" mentality in the State. The residents of the state are so intertwined with the oil industry that the communities become inured to the pollution.

- **How did the community overcome the challenges? If the community wasn't able to address the challenges, what were the impacts on the project? How did the project move forward?**

The challenges remain the same, and apathy within the community, as well as a basic lack of knowledge has made the struggle all the more challenging. The Ponca Tribe as

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well as many local residents adjacent to the Continental Carbon facility has joined a lawsuit against the company. While the Tribe has not settled, many local residents have, and moved from their homes. Unfortunately, in many cases, settlements were not sizable enough to afford a move to an area not impacted by other industry, and in many cases White Eagle residents moved to the South side of Ponca City, only to face other woes. Settlements also were not inclusive of long-term medical care, and the impacts of this are yet to be seen. Many local residents, the Ponca Tribe, and local activists continue to struggle to educate the community, and keep the project moving ahead.

• What tools or methods did the community use that is transferable to other communities facing similar issues?

Forming alliances with other individuals, and organizations within the community facing the same risks, outside the normal ethnic, and or socio economic boundaries. Continued educational outreach to the public regarding the health risks, and long-term impacts of environmental pollution. As well as staging very public rally's and or gatherings to spread the work and the word throughout the community.

• What were the major successes in the eyes of the community?

1. The sense of empowerment and pride that was achieved through "Direct Action."
2. The educational outreach and support received from organizations outside of our immediate area.
3. The "Just Transitions" achieved.

Community Leader Bio Sketch: Casey Camp-Horinek is a member of the Ponca Nation of Oklahoma. A life long political and environmental activist, Casey has founded the Coyote Creek Center for Environmental Justice to educate and empower Native American Communities facing gross injustice through environmental pollution and the ensuing socio economic impacts. In the 1980's Casey worked directly with Cary Dickerson and Grace Thorpe to halt the infamous "Black Fox" power plant. In addition, Casey has marched with Caesar Chavez, worked actively with the American Indian Movement, and helped stop a hazardous waste facility from being built on the site of the historic Chilocco Indian School in North Central Oklahoma.

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